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For information

Progress report on mainstreaming gender in UNICEF

Summary

The present report presents the progress achieved in integrating gender as a cross-cutting concern in UNICEF country programmes. It analyses achievements and identifies areas necessary for strengthening programme guidance, quality assurance and organizational mechanisms for supporting and monitoring the mainstreaming of gender in the work of UNICEF.

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I. Introduction

1. In the evolution of the UNICEF policy on the advancement of women, the policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, approved by the Executive Board in 1994 (E/ICEF/1994/13/Rev.1, decision 1994/A/4), is significant. It calls for a shift from the "women in development" approach to the "gender" approach. This approach recognizes the structural inequality that exists between men and women and boys and girls, and implies the implementation of actions to address the underlying causes which perpetuate the disparities that women and girls face in the enjoyment of rights throughout their lives.

2. The policy recommends the integration of gender concerns as a cross-cutting theme in country programmes and the promotion of gender equality in national development programmes by adopting a life-cycle perspective, giving special attention to the girl child. This includes attention to gender-specific goals as part of the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children. It identifies priority areas for action for girls and women within the life-cycle perspective and the frameworks of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The policy also calls for the establishment of organizational mechanisms for implementing the recommended actions.

3. The World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, adopted at the World Summit for Children, contains many specific references to women and girls and singles out the girl child for special attention. Eleven of the Summit goals relate explicitly to the special needs of girls and women. The mid-decade review of progress towards the Summit goals (A/51/256) and the annual reports to the Executive Board on follow-up to the Summit have emphasized, *inter alia*, the need to adopt gender-sensitive approaches to girls' education, maternal mortality reduction and the elimination of gender disparities in the monitoring of national achievements.

4. This overall framework is strengthened by the joint responsibility of UNICEF and other agencies for follow-up to the global conferences. In relation to gender, the International Conference on Population and Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women are of special importance. The Executive Board approved measures for UNICEF follow-up to these conferences in 1995 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1, decision 1995/29) and 1996 (E/ICEF/1996/12/Rev.1, decision 1996/3), respectively. Priority areas identified for follow-up by UNICEF were girls' education; the health of girls and women, including adolescents; children's and women's rights; and strengthening partnerships for advocacy and action on the girl child and women's empowerment.

5. The goals of gender equality were reaffirmed in the UNICEF mission statement, which states, *inter alia*, that "UNICEF aims, through its country programmes, to promote the equal rights of women and girls and to support their full participation in the political, social and economic development of their communities". The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the most pertinent human rights instruments for children and women, provide the essential framework for the mandate and mission of UNICEF. The principles of non-discrimination and universality are central to the rights approach and strengthen programming for gender equality, since they require integrating attention to gender issues into social and economic policy and legislation.

6. Within this framework, the agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system, adopted by the Council in 1997 (A/52/3, chapter IV), provide new opportunities. They have served to reinforce UNICEF efforts in the operationalization of its gender equality goals and to strengthen country-level, inter-agency collaboration to integrate gender concerns in country programmes of cooperation.

7. UNICEF has recorded significant advances in mainstreaming attention to gender issues in all of its work. The secretariat has reported on progress to the Executive Board in the annual reports of the Executive Director, the progress reports on follow-up to the World Summit for Children and other global conferences and in other programme documents, including country programme recommendations (CPRs). The present report supplements the information provided in those documents and in other reports being considered at the Board's 1999 annual session. The report discusses the progress achieved in integrating gender as a cross-cutting concern in UNICEF country programmes. It also analyses achievements and identifies areas for action to strengthen programme guidance, ensure quality and improve organizational mechanisms for supporting and monitoring the mainstreaming of gender in the work of UNICEF.

II. Mainstreaming gender in the country programme

A. The development and application of tools

8. In adopting the Women's Equality and Empowerment Framework in 1993, UNICEF was among the first organizations in the United Nations system to identify an operational tool for mainstreaming gender that is appropriate to its mandate and work. The Framework postulates that inequality needs to be addressed at five levels: (a) welfare; (b) access to resources; (c) awareness-raising; (d) participation in decision-making; and (e) control over resources and actions for social, economic and political development. This analysis becomes the basis for setting goals, formulating strategies and developing indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

9. In 1996, of the 40 country notes and subsequent CPRs submitted to the Executive Board, 33 included gender equality as a goal as well as specific actions to support the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The children's and women's rights framework is evident in several of the CPRs approved by the Executive Board in 1997 and 1998, for example those for Ecuador, India and Mali.

10. Actions for mainstreaming gender in the sectoral areas of health, nutrition, education, water and sanitation and emergencies, and in partnerships and participation in political life, are addressed at two levels: (a) the development of programme policies and programme guidance materials at headquarters; and (b) support to practical interventions in country programmes.

11. The UNICEF strategies for water and environmental sanitation, basic education, health and children in need of special protection emphasize the integration of gender concerns. This is reflected in such programme guidance materials as the manual on mainstreaming gender in water and sanitation; guidelines for mainstreaming the girls' education initiative; guidelines for safe motherhood and maternal and neonatal survival; the notebook on youth health and development; and resource materials on gender issues specific to emergency situations.

12. While the lack of data disaggragated by age and sex and the limited analysis of the social factors that determine gender relations have affected the full mainstreaming in country programmes, practical interventions in the areas of health, nutrition, education and water and sanitation increasingly give attention to improving the access and quality of services to girls and women, increasing women's participation in the management of services and special measures to protect the rights of girls and women. The report on progress and challenges in achieving universal basic education being considered at the Executive Board's 1999 annual session (E/ICEF/1999/14), discusses the actions taken to increase girls' enrolment and retention in primary education. In other sectors, examples include "women-friendly" health services in Bangladesh and Peru; the youth career development programme for girls at risk of sexual exploitation in Thailand; literacy programmes for indigenous women in Bolivia and Mexico; peer education programmes for adolescents in Namibia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe; programmes for women's participation in water management committees in Honduras and Nigeria; and integrated programmes for income generation, literacy and child care in China, Egypt, Indonesia, Senegal, the Sudan, Togo and Viet Nam.

B. Support to building capacities for mainstreaming gender

13. Capacity-building for staff and counterparts has been identified as a major strategy for mainstreaming gender. Since 1993, there have been special efforts, both at headquarters and by regional and country offices, for:

(a) The development of a gender training package and programme guidance materials for gender mainstreaming;

(b) The designation of staff members in regional and country offices to serve as gender focal points, providing them with necessary competence;

(c) The training of more than 1,250 staff and 9,500 national counterparts in some 275 workshops. This has included the training of peacekeepers and management personnel to protect and advance the rights of girls and women and promote behavioural change and communication for gender equality in emergency situations.

14. Periodic desk reviews of the capacity-building programme have been undertaken to make mid-course corrections and respond to emerging needs. These reviews indicate that gender training has proven effective in ensuring greater attention to gender concerns in the country programme process and in promoting actions for mainstreaming gender in national development polices and programmes. However, there are still gaps in implementation. In their assessment of capacity-building

efforts, the reviews concluded that there were difficulties in translating training into concrete follow-up actions to mainstream gender as a cross-cutting theme in the country programme, owing to lack of disaggregated data systems, inconsistent support and the lack of appropriate tools and monitoring mechanisms.

15. Gender focal point networks have been established in all regions, with the internal network currently comprising 95 gender focal points. Regional networks meet at least once a year to identify priorities. The Gender, Partnership and Participation Section of Programme Division provides technical support and policy guidance to the regional networks. Annual meetings of gender focal points review programme experiences, share and review new opportunities and define emerging areas for joint action in advancing the gender goals.

16. The promotion of regional and national capacities for gender mainstreaming takes place mainly through support to national institutions, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community groups, the development of technical networks of trainers and gender experts, the adaptation of the training package to local needs and the preparation of special materials. Some examples include the establishment of gender training networks in Ethiopia and the United Republic of Tanzania; the development, production and dissemination of a multimedia gender training module in the Middle East and North Africa region in both English and Arabic; gender modules for use in community-based programmes in Haiti; the training of male and female municipal personnel in Nicaragua; the orientation of male and female representatives in local councils in India and Uganda; the establishment of a core group of male gender trainers in South Africa; and gender sensitization of male and female teachers and administrators in educational systems in the Gambia, Guinea and other countries in West Africa.

17. The 1997 desk review of the capacity-building programme showed that while gender training is the strongest mechanism for building capacity, the challenge was to follow-up the training with tools to support translation of the concepts to practical actions in the country programme. The mid-term reviews of the country programmes in Ethiopia, Uganda and Zimbabwe also indicated the need for tools and programme guidance to assist practical implementation.

18. Following the Secretary-General's call, in October 1997, for the entire United Nations system to mainstream gender in all programmes and to provide practical guidance for operational mainstreaming of gender issues, UNICEF prepared a programmer's handbook. The handbook outlines steps to be taken to ensure that gender is mainstreamed at the different stages of the country programme, using the rights perspective and in accordance with the Economic and Social Council's agreed conclusions on gender. The draft version will be tested in selected countries during 1999 and 2000.

19. The documentation of best practices in gender mainstreaming and the building of networks for knowledge acquisition and exchange has supported capacity-building efforts. Based on experiences of country programmes, a set of 20 best practices in gender mainstreaming and special initiatives for women and girls has been completed. These documents will be distributed widely within UNICEF and shared with national counterparts and the United Nations system as resources for strengthening gender mainstreaming efforts.

C. Regional and country initiatives in gender mainstreaming

20. Implementation of national plans for follow-up to the World Summit for Children, the International Conference on Population and Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women has created new opportunities for strengthening regional and country initiatives for girls and women in the promotion of women's and children's rights. The report on follow-up to the World Summit for Children that is under discussion at the 1999 annual session (E/ICEF/1999/9) discusses progress in the reduction of gender disparities and the outcome of actions taken to integrate gender issues in the achievement of the Summit goals at regional levels.

21. UNICEF is closely involved with the United Nations inter-agency campaigns around the issue of violence against women and girls in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and South Asia. Lessons learned in South Asia in involving men in seeking solutions to violence currently are being documented. The "Meena" and "Sara" initiatives in South Asia and Africa are popular with girls and aim both to empower them with knowledge about their rights and to change community attitudes. A regional programme for the elimination of female genital mutilation in Eastern and Southern Africa is underway in Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia and in many countries in West Africa, including Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Senegal. UNICEF has supported the efforts of Governments and the Inter-African Committee on Ending Harmful Practices and other NGOs in mobilizing support for the Organization of African Unity

(OAU) Declaration on Violence Against Women, adopted at the OAU Summit in June 1998. A proposal for a regional information network on girls in Latin America emerged from a regional seminar on the equal rights of girls, which was organized by the Government of Mexico and UNICEF.

22. Many UNICEF country programmes go beyond the issues of girls' and women's access to and utilization of services, as in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Nicaragua, Peru, the Philippines, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Viet Nam. The advances are reflected in multisectoral initiatives for addressing violence against girls and women, legal literacy, women's participation and leadership and support to national machineries for the integration of gender in national development plans and legal reform. Studies on the situation of girls have resulted in the development and implementation of national programmes delaying the age of marriage and early pregnancy, and the protection of girls from violence, sexual and economic exploitation. While there have been advances, there are also growing demands for action around these issues.

23. The development and establishment of systems for the collection and analysis of data disaggregated by sex, age and location are priority concerns in most country programmes. The mid-decade review of progress towards the World Summit for Children goals resulted in the development of benchmarks from the multiple indicator cluster surveys and other surveys carried out in many countries during 1995. They have provided the foundation for the development of national data systems on children and women in such countries as Bangladesh, China, Egypt, Peru and Zambia. These data systems have proven valuable in the preparation of country programmes and in tracking gender mainstreaming at national and subnational levels. The ongoing work of the Education For All 2000 Assessment, which demands gender disaggregation of data, is an important step in education that is supported by UNICEF and the four other partners from the World Conference on Education for All.

D. Partnerships to support gender mainstreaming

24. The evolution of an International Network for Girls' Rights, with a membership of 600 organizations, has been a positive development in expanding the partnerships of the Working Group on Girls of the NGO Committee on UNICEF. In the area of children's and women's rights, there are several initiatives aimed at alliance-building among Governments, NGOs, activists and treaty bodies around the common issues of health, education, participation, discrimination in family law and inheritance and violence in families. In Bolivia, Costa Rica, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Malawi, Mauritius, the Philippines, Nepal, Senegal and other countries, these initiatives have created new opportunities for dialogue on women's and girls' rights within the community and in social policy arenas for bringing about change. Further, the forging of linkages between community-based organizations and national bodies are crucial in providing strategic support to the implementation and monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

III. Opportunities and challenges

A. Emerging issues

25. At its 1999 annual session, the Executive Board is also considering a report on the goals and strategies for children beyond 2000 (E/ICEF/1999/10). For drafting that report, the secretariat prepared a background paper on gender equality and the rights of women and girls, in order to strengthen programming approaches that create an enabling environment for rights and overcome the barriers that women and girls encounter in their daily lives. The background paper stresses that the gender dimension of socialization, behavioural development and change, interpersonal relationships and attitudes, in childhood and adulthood, will need further elaboration for practical translation in the areas of early childhood care for growth, survival and development, basic education, adolescent development and other priorities of the medium-term plan for the period 1998–2001 (E/ICEF/1998/13 and Corr.1).

26. Lessons learned from the better parenting programme in the Caribbean region should be used to support the development of programme content and methodologies for orienting parents on gender socialization during childhood. The content must strengthen efforts to provide parents with the knowledge and skills to create an enabling family environment for child care, in which there is no discrimination on the basis of gender. The responsibilities and involvement of fathers and males in child care requires even greater attention than already has been given in country programmes. In basic education programmes, the growing recognition of the need for life-skills education for both school-based and out-of-school adolescents calls for innovative responses. The integration of components on

mutual respect of rights, gender equality and non-violent behaviours in the entire range of learning situations for boys and girls will be fundamental to responsible life decisions within the context of the development of children and protection of their rights. In the area of adolescent development, actions need to provide new opportunities for preparing girls to defend and realize their rights. Advocacy tools and programme interventions require promotion of the rights of adolescents to information, motivating their participation and supporting their efforts to be change agents to address responsibly such issues as early marriage, female genital mutilation, exploitation, HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence.

27. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the Common Country Assessment provide the opportunity to reinforce and support the mainstreaming of gender and follow-up to the global conferences. The initial success of the United Nations theme groups on gender in, *inter alia*, Malawi, Mongolia, Mozambique, Myanmar and the Philippines, indicates that UNICEF capacity-building efforts in these countries have assisted in the mainstreaming of gender in the UNDAF process. At the global level, UNICEF, as the current co-chair of the United Nations Development Group subgroup on gender, is in a position to contribute to and influence the process of technical support and programme guidance for effective integration of gender issues.

B. Strengthening capacity and impact

28. The UNDAF process and other inter-agency initiatives promoted by the Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality will guide the development of indicators for planning and assessing gender in the country programme. The UNICEF programmer's handbook contains the basic information in this regard, which will be tested in selected country programmes. During 1999, a framework for the evaluation of UNICEF efforts in mainstreaming gender will be developed and tested for conduct of gender impact studies, based on regional trends and experiences in monitoring the situation of children and women, the gender audits conducted in the West Bank and Gaza and the Sudan and mid-term reviews and country evaluations in Burkina Faso and other countries.

29. The implications of globalization, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and increasing situations of crisis and instability on the lives of women and children are enormous. Country-specific strategies and tools are being developed in collaboration with regional partners, the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, inter-agency bodies in the United Nations system and the international financial institutions. The report on ensuring children's rights in Africa that is before the Executive Board at the 1999 annual session (E/ICEF/1999/12) discusses the gender aspects of meeting these challenges in Africa.

30. Resources for gender mainstreaming are included in country programme management plans. Supplementary funds have supported such special initiatives as girls' education, ending female genital mutilation and violence against women and girls, and adolescent development in the promotion of women's and girls' rights. Resource mobilization in national budgets and international cooperation will be crucial for sustaining and expanding these efforts in realizing the goals of the World Summit for Children, the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the goals of other global conferences.

31. The most important challenge is to ensure that the international human rights instruments are effective in making a difference in the lives of women and children. In this process, the gender focal points are catalysts, advocates and change agents and constitute the core resource of UNICEF in its efforts to mainstream gender. Except in a few large country programmes, these focal points have other main responsibilities, which sometimes can adversely affect their support to gender mainstreaming throughout the country programme. At the same time, in the context of continued demands arising from the gender- and rights-based approaches, there will be a need for capacity-building and tools for ensuring competence, compliance and commitment of all UNICEF staff to gender goals and the Economic and Social Council's agreed conclusions on gender. Institutional mechanisms will need to be strengthened to sustain, expand and monitor the gains achieved in mainstreaming gender to promote the equal rights of girls and women.